

Message Text

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62/46

ACTION PM-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-04 EUR-12 NEA-06 IO-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 ACDA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 H-01 INR-05

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

SAJ-01 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /076 W
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O R 151300Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5255

INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DACCA

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y -- TEXT --

E.O. 11 82: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, XO, IN,US

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER ON US NAVAL FORCE IN INDIAN
OCEAN

SUMMARY: FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN REITERATED TO BOTH HOUSES
OF PARLIAMENT NOVEMBER 15 THE "DEEP CONCERN AND MISGIVINGS" OF
THE GOI ABOUT THE US NAVAL TASK FORCE ENTRY INTO THE INDIAN
OCEAN, BUT HE MADE IT CLEAR INDIA WOULD NOT MAKE IT A
BILATERAL ISSUE AND INSTEAD WOULD TRY TO MOBILIZE WORLD OPINION
AND PROCEED THROUGH THE UNITED NATIONS.THE INDIAN POSITION
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IS THUS UNCHANGED. END SUMMARY.

1. RESPONDING TO A CALLING ATTENTION NOTICE BY COMMUNIST, SOCIALIST AND CONGRESS PARTY MEMBERS, FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN READ THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ON " THE REPORTED ENTRY OF A NAVAL TASK FORCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN".

"ON NOVEMBER 6,1974 A TASK FORCE OF US 7TH FLEET CONSISTING, ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION OF AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER THE "USS CONSTELLATION", THREE DESTROYERS, AND ONE FAST COMBAT SUPPLY SHIP, ENTERED THE INDIAN OCEAN. THE EXACT DURATION OFSLHE TASK FORCE'S STAY IS NOT KNOWN THOUGH FROM SOME REMARKS OF AN OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT SPOKESMAN IT APPEARS THAT IT WILL BE AN EXTENSIVE VISIT.

"THE HOUSE WILL RECALL THAT THE US 7TH FLEET LAST APPEARED IN THE INDIAN OCEAN OF JUNE 29,1974 AND REMAINED THERE TILL THE 30TH OF AUGUST; AND ALSO THAT THE US AIRCRAFT CARRIER, THE "KITTY HAWK", WAS DEPLOYED THERE FROM AMRCH 11 TO APRIL 21,1974. GOVERNMENT REITERATES THEIR DEEP CONCERN AND MISGIVINGS AT THESE DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE INCONSISTENT WITH THE UN RESOLUTIONS DECLARING THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE.

" RECENTLY THE UN 15-MEMBER AD-HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN, OF WHICH INDIA IS A MEMBER, HAS RECOMMENDED TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO CALL ON THE GREAT POWERS TO REFRAIN FROM INCREASING AND STRENGHTENING THEIR MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION AS AN ESSENTIAL FIRST STEP TOWARDS THE RELAXATION OF TENSION AND THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE AREA. A FURTHER PROPOSAL WAS MADE UNANIMOUSLY BY THE AD-HOC COMMITTEE TO CONVENE A UN SPONSORED CONFERENCE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN.

"AT THIS STAGE I SHOULD LIKE TO ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT GOVERNMENT WILL CONTINUE THEIR EFFORTS TO MOBILISE INTERNATIONAL OPINION AND WITH OTHER STATES OF THE REGION, TAKE ALL YOSSIBLE MEASURES TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE OF CREATING THE INDIAN OCEAN AS AN AREA OF PEACE AND TRANQUILITY".

2. QUESTIONERS PRESSED CHAVAN TO BE MORE SPECIFIC. WHAT WOULD INDIA DO? WOULD IT WARN THE UNITED STATES THAT ITS PRESENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WOULD PREVENT IMPROVEMENT OF INDO-US RELATIONS? COULD HE DENY THAT THE SOVIET PRESENCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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IN THE INDIAN OCEAN WAS AS LARGE AS THE ALLEGED 9000 SHIP-DAYS IN 1973? CHAVAN MANAGED TO DODGE MOSTOF THESE QUESTIONS. HE KEPT REPEATING THE SAME BASIC ANSWER. IN SUBSTANCE HE SAID THAT WHILE INDIA WAS CONCERNED, IT RECOGNIZED THE PRESENCE OF THE US,US, FRENCH AND SOVIET NAVIES IN THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A "FACT OF LIFE". THE PROBLEM WAS HOW TO MOST EFFECTIVELY TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT PRESENCE. INDIA BELEIVED THAT THERE SHOULD BE UNIFIED ACTION BY THE LITTORAL COUNTRIES THROUGH

THE UN. HE RULED OUT AN INDIAN INITIATIVE TO CALL AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OR SUMMIT MEETING OF GREAT POWERS.

3. CHAVAN DID SAY THAT INDIA AND THE UNITED STATES HAD "AGREED TO DISAGREE" ON THIS SUBJECT DURING SECRETARY KISSINGER'S VISIT. BUT, HE ADDED, INDIA WASN'T GOING TO MAKE IT INTO A BILATERAL ISSUE. ALSO, THE US HAD INFORMED THE INDIAN NAVY IN ADVANCE OF THE ENTRY OF THE US SHIPS. A US REPRESENTATIVE HAD BEEN CALLED IN TO BE TOLD OF CONCERN ABOUT THE ENTRY OF THE TASK FORCE.

4. ATTENDANCE IN THE LOWER HOUSE WAS POOR. MANY MEMBERS WHO PARTICIPATED IN PRECEDING DEBATE ON POLICE BEATING OF J.P. NARAYAN IN PATNA LEFT WHEN THE CALLING ATTENTION NOTICE BEGAN.

5. COMMENT: CHAVAN HAD ONLY A SLIM BASIS FOR HIS STATEMENT THAT A US OFFICIAL HAD BEEN CALLED IN AND TOLD OF INDIAN CONCERN ABOUT THE TASK FORCE. JOINT SECRETARY FOR THE AMERICAS TEJA DID CALL IN THE DCM ON NOVEMBER 12 BUT THE MAJOR SUBJECT WAS JOINT COMMISSIONS AND HE INQUIRED ABOUT THE TASK FORCE ONLY IN PASSING, MENTIONING THAT THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN THE MOVEMENT OF THE SHIPS. ON THAT OCCASION AND AGAIN ON NOVEMBER 15 TEJA INDICATED THAT THE GOI DID NOT INTEND THAT THIS MATTER INTERFERE WITH IMPROVING US-INDIA RELATIONS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: NAVAL FORCES, INDIAN OCEAN ZONE OF PEACE, UNGA RESOLUTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 15 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: cunninfx
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974NEWDE15423
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740331-0191
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741140/aaaabhka.tel
Line Count: 143
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION PM
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: cunninfx
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 MAY 2002 by rowelle0>; APPROVED <18 MAR 2003 by cunninfx>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN MINISTER ON US NAVAL FORCE IN INDIAN OCEAN
TAGS: PFOR, XO, IN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005